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ABSTRACT

Since the 1970s, there has been a growing trend in the number and percentage of part-time, adjunct, and contingent faculty in higher education. While the working conditions of such faculty vary dramatically, their employment conditions are substandard when compared to those of their full-time colleagues. Generally, they do not receive any benefits and are only paid for classroom hours. Thus, they operate on a much lower pay scale than their full-time colleagues. They also tend to receive little or no institutional support and are far less likely to have opportunities to interact with colleagues, participate in institutional governance, or receive regular feedback or evaluations. The overuse of part-time, adjunct, and contingent faculty causes a greater systemic problem with institution-wide effects. By employing so many of these faculty members, many institutions create a two-tier class structure among their own faculty. The pervasiveness of this practice within the field of English as a Second Language (ESL) has undermined the value of ESL itself. Recommendations include the following: compensate these faculty members appropriately; hire then with the same care and interview processes as full-time faculty members; provide appropriate supports; and encourage participation in governance. (Contains 21 references.) (SM)

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An International Education Association Founded in 1966

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TESOL Position Paper on Equitable Treatment for Part-time, Adjunct, and Contingent Faculty

Since the 1970s, experts have noted with increasing concern a trend in employment patterns of faculty at institutions of higher education, specifically the tremendous growth in the number and percentage of part-time, adjunct, and contingent faculty in higher education. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) reported in its *Digest of Education Statistics 2001* that the proportion of part-time, adjunct, and contingent faculty in degree-granting institutions rose from 33 percent in 1987 to almost 47 percent in 1997. Statistics suggest that this trend has been growing since the 1970s. In its report, *Part-time Instructional Faculty and Staff* (February 2002), NCES notes, "that there has been an increase in the number and percentage of part-time faculty over the last 20 years is undeniable." This increase has been most apparent in the notoriously high ratio of part-time to full-time instructional faculty in the expanding community college system, but the trend continues to grow in other institutions of higher learning as well.

NCES is not alone in noting this increase in part-time, adjunct, and contingent faculty; organizations such as the Modern Language Association (MLA), the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), and the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) have issued a variety of statements and reports noting this trend. In fact, in 1997, associations from several academic disciplines, including MLA and AAUP, formed a group to address this problem directly: the Coalition on the Academic Workforce (CAW). In surveys by MLA and CAW, results indicate that this trend is most evident in the humanities (such as foreign languages, literature, and English); however, this has been an acute problem in the field of English as a second language (ESL) for decades.

In 1980, at its annual convention in San Francisco, California, TESOL passed its first member resolution addressing the concerns of part-time, adjunct, and contingent faculty. Since then, the association has passed five additional member resolutions, all focusing on issues surrounding part-time, adjunct, and contingent employment concerns. While there are some valid reasons why an institution may employ a faculty member only a part-time or adjunct basis (such as to fill in for a faculty member on sabbatical or to temporarily provide expertise not already present among the faculty), the trend among many institutions is to do so as a cost-saving measure. Rather than fill a single full-time position, many institutions will hire two or three part-time, adjunct, and contingent faculty. This practice undermines the educational system on a variety of levels.

While the working conditions of part-time, adjunct, and contingent faculty can and do vary dramatically, their employment conditions are certainly substandard when compared with those of their full-time colleagues. Generally, most part-time, adjunct, and contingent faculty do not

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receive any benefits; the employee must seek out and pay for critical services such as health and disability insurance. In addition, most part-time, adjunct, and contingent faculty are paid only for classroom hours and are not compensated for the out-of-classroom work (such as office hours) their jobs require. As a result, they operate on a much lower pay scale than their full-time colleagues. Moreover, part-time, adjunct, and contingent and adjunct faculty tend to receive little or no institutional support. Many may have no office or even have access to basic office materials or equipment. Likewise, many do not receive support for professional development activities. Further, part-time, adjunct, and contingent faculty are far less likely to have opportunities to interact with colleagues, participate in institutional governance, or receive regular feedback or evaluations.

With such limitations and low pay, many part-time, adjunct, and contingent faculty end up working many jobs at several institutions to make a decent living. These substandard working conditions are deplorable and are reason enough to oppose this trend. However, this overuse of part-time, adjunct, and contingent faculty causes a greater systemic problem with institution-wide effects.

By employing an inordinate number of part-time, adjunct, and contingent faculty, many institutions end up creating a two-tier class structure among their own faculty. There are faculty members who enjoy the status and privilege of full-time employment, and its attendant benefits, and those who don't. This can have an effect on faculty relations, because many part-time, adjunct, and contingent faculty are denied the support, professional evaluation, compensation, and even collegial involvement of their full-time peers. This affects instructors' morale and productivity and, ultimately, can compromise academic quality.

In his analysis in the Fall 2002 issue of *peerReview*, Ernst Benjamin notes that as a disproportionate number of part-time, adjunct, and contingent faculty are used to teach core undergraduate subjects, "the increasing reliance on contingent appointees for undergraduate instruction …obviously shapes the undergraduate experience." The quality and level of support given to faculty is directly related to the quality of teaching and mentoring provided to students. Without adequate office space, and having to work at multiple institutions, part-time, adjunct, and contingent faculty often do not have appropriate space or sufficient time to meet with students outside the classroom. Moreover, a greater proportion of noninstructional tasks ends up falling to a decreasing number of full-time faculty, meaning that more of their time is spent on non-instructional-related tasks. Finally, without support for professional development opportunities, it becomes very difficult for qualified instructors who work on a part-time, adjunct, or contingent basis to keep abreast of new developments in their field or discipline.

The pervasiveness of this practice within the field of ESL has undermined the value of ESL itself. Since the academic discipline of ESL has often suffered from the

misconception of being purely "remedial," many institutions have kept the programs themselves relegated to second-class status by keeping ESL departments staffed mostly by part-time, adjunct, and contingent faculty. This is a tragic circumstance, because those teaching ESL, who have the same academic credentials and professional experience as their full-time colleagues, are vital contributors to the instructional mission of their institutions.

Principles and Recommendations

TESOL has long opposed excessive use and exploitation of part-time, adjunct, and contingent and adjunct faculty, because it undermines academic quality and freedom and respect for teaching. All members of an institution's faculty are first and foremost instructors, so they all deserve equal pay for equal work and should be treated fairly and with an equal amount of respect, regardless of their employment status.

When the use of part-time, adjunct, and contingent faculty is called for, TESOL urges the following actions be taken:

Compensation

- Salaries for part-time, adjunct, and contingent faculty should be pro-rated based on the percentage of a full-time workload.
- Part-time, adjunct, and contingent faculty should receive benefits, such as health insurance, holiday pay, and sick and vacation days, that are pro-rated based on the percentage of a full-time workload.
- Part-time, adjunct, and contingent faculty should receive compensation for office hours for student conferences, faculty meetings, instructional preparation, and participation in institutional committee work. In addition, additional job responsibilities should be considered in assessing paid hours.
- Part-time, adjunct, and contingent faculty should be eligible for the same types of professional development support, tuition reimbursement, release time, support for pursuing grants, and other stipends for instructional projects as well as the right to participate in faculty development events as received by full-time faculty

Employment, responsibilities, and professional support

- Part-time, adjunct, and contingent faculty should be hired with the same care and subjected to the same interview process as full-time faculty members.
- Part-time, adjunct, and contingent faculty should receive timely contracts or appointment letters, and class assignments should be made to allow adequate preparation time whenever possible.

- Contracts for part-time, adjunct, and contingent faculty should clearly state length of employment responsibilities and remuneration and should reflect contracts for full-time faculty.
- Part-time, adjunct, and contingent faculty should be given timely notification in writing of teaching assignments and a stated probationary time for evaluation that is commensurate with institutional policy for full-time faculty.
- New part-time, adjunct, and contingent faculty should receive adequate mentoring, orientation, and support, including written information concerning department and institutional policies.
- Part-time, adjunct, and contingent faculty should have adequate office space and support services comparable to those received by full-time faculty.
- Part-time, adjunct, and contingent faculty should receive adequate support for obtaining and developing instructional materials.
- Seniority systems for part-time, adjunct, and contingent faculty are specifically defined in writing and commensurate with full-time faculty. Moreover, seniority is respected so that part-time, adjunct, and contingent faculty with satisfactory evaluations who have been rehired for several semesters can reasonably expect continued employment.
- Part-time, adjunct, and contingent faculty should have the same opportunity for promotion as full-time faculty with comparable degrees and experience.

Participation in governance

- Part-time, adjunct, and contingent faculty should be allowed to participate in institutional governance and decision-making processes that affect faculty working conditions.
- Part-time, adjunct, and contingent faculty should be allowed to participate in decisions that affect faculty evaluation procedures, individual and program performance improvement plans, and criteria for student placement and exit criteria.
- Part-time, adjunct, and contingent faculty should be allowed to serve on curriculum committees when such committees involve faculty from multiple disciplines.

Since excessive use of part-time, adjunct, and contingent faculty is an institutional practice, it is critical that everyone at a given institution, both faculty and staff, be engaged to address the problem. Likewise, unions, decision makers, and legislators at the state and local level (especially in the case of public institutions) need to address the issues and the core of the problem. Although the conditions and practices cited here are drawn from U.S. institutions, the problems are global in nature, and TESOL's recommendations should be seen as applying worldwide. While using part-time, adjunct, and contingent and adjunct faculty will never completely disappear, it is important that

all those involved in education work to improve employment conditions for teachers and instructors everywhere.

Resources

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